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Notice of Independent Review Decision

DATE OF REVIEW: 3/22/10

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE

The services under review include the medical necessity of a left hand/wrist stellate ganglion block.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR EACH PHYSICIAN OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER WHO REVIEWED THE DECISION

The reviewer is a Medical Doctor who is board certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. The reviewer has practiced for greater than 15 years and performs this type of procedure in practice.

REVIEW OUTCOME

Upon independent review the reviewer finds that the previous adverse determination/adverse determinations should be:

- ☒ Upheld (Agree)
- ☐ Overturned (Disagree)
- ☐ Partially Overturned (Agree in part/Disagree in part)

The reviewer agrees with the previous adverse determination regarding the medical necessity of a left hand/wrist stellate ganglion block.

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW

Records were received and reviewed from the following parties: Orthopedic Surgery Group and Inc.

These records consist of the following (duplicate records are only listed from one source):
Ortho: UR review form dated 1/11/10, 2/1/10 report by MD, office notes by Dr. from 10/22/09 to 12/10/09 and Upper extremity eval 10/26/09.

1/15/10 denial letter, 2/9/10 denial letter, office notes by Dr. 1/7/10 to 1/11/10 and an eval and treat script 1/11/10.

We did not receive the ODG Guidelines from Carrier/URA.

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:

This patient sustained a crush injury to the left wrist/hand area. Following acute treatment with orthopedist, MD, the patient was diagnosed with reduced function of the hand and developing CRPS. The patient was determined to be in need of Occupational Therapy and underwent an OT evaluation on 10/26/09. Secondary to significant pain, he was referred to Dr. for Pain Management. Dr. adjusted medications and requested a stellate ganglion block on 12/7/09. Therapy was performed which yielded significant improvement. At this time, the patient is working with lessening of restricted activities.

ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION OF THE DECISION INCLUDE CLINICAL BASIS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS USED TO SUPPORT THE DECISION.

Recommended hierarchy of options as indicated below. The goal is to improve function. Multiple pathophysiological mechanisms are responsible including neuropathic (sympathetic and independently-maintained pain), and immunologic (regional inflammation and altered human leukocyte antigens). Both peripheral sensitization and central sensitization have been proposed. There are no evidence-based treatment guidelines but several groups have begun to organize treatment algorithms. Recommendations: 1. Rehabilitation: (a) Early stages: Build a therapeutic alliance. Analgesia, encouragement and education are key. Physical modalities include desensitization, isometric exercises, resisted range of motion, and stress loading. If not applied appropriately, PT can actually be detrimental. (b) Next steps: Increase flexibility with introduction of gentle active ROM and stretching (to treat accompanying myofascial pain syndrome). Other modalities may include muscle relaxants, trigger point injections and electrical stimulation (based on anecdotal evidence). Edema control may also be required (elevation, retrograde sympathetic blocks, diuretics and adrenoceptor blockers when sympathetically maintained pain-SMP is present). (c) Continued steps: Continue active ROM; stress loading; scrubbing techniques; isotonic strengthening; general aerobic conditioning; and postural normalization. (d) Final steps: Normalization of use; assessment of ergonomics, posture and modifications at home and work. In some cases increased requirements of analgesic medications, psychotherapy, invasive anesthetic techniques and SCS may be required.

2. Psychological treatment: Focused on improved quality of life, development of pain coping skills, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and improving facilitation of other modalities. (a) Early stages: education. (b) Next steps: clinical psychological assessment (after 6 to 8 weeks): identification of stressors; identification of comorbid Axis I psychiatric disorders (depression, anxiety, panic and post-traumatic stress).

3. Pain management: (a) Pharmacological: antidepressants (particularly amitriptyline); anticonvulsants (particularly gabapentin); steroids; NSAIDs; opioids; calcitonin; bisphosphonates; $\alpha 1$ adrenoceptor antagonists (terazosin or phenoxybenzamine). The latter class of drugs has been helpful in SMP. Clonidine has been given transdermally and epidurally. Bisphosphonates have some literature support in the presence of osteopenia. (b) Minimally invasive: depends on degree of SMP, stage of rehabilitation (passive or active

movement), and response to blocks. Responders to sympathetic blocks (3 to 6 blocks with concomitant PT) may be all that is required. For non-responders somatic block or epidural infusion may be required to optimize analgesia for PT. (c) More invasive: After failure of progression or partial relief, consider tunneled epidural catheters for prolonged sympathetic or somatic blocks or neurostimulation with SCS in CRPS-I and II. Also consider peripheral nerve stimulation in CRPS-II and intrathecal drug delivery in patients with dystonia, failed neurostimulation, long-standing disease, multi-limb involvement and requirement of palliative care. (d) Surgical: Sympathectomy is not generally recommended, but has been considered in patients that respond to sympathetic blocks. Pre-procedure the patient should have outcomes assessed with radiofrequency and neurolytic procedures. The reviewer indicates that the medical records provided have not met the ODG criteria listed above. Therefore, this invasive procedure is denied at this time.

A DESCRIPTION AND THE SOURCE OF THE SCREENING CRITERIA OR OTHER CLINICAL BASIS USED TO MAKE THE DECISION:

- ☐ ACOEM- AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE UM KNOWLEDGEBASE
- ☐ AHCPR- AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH & QUALITY GUIDELINES
- ☐ DWC- DIVISION OF WORKERS COMPENSATION POLICIES OR GUIDELINES
- ☐ EUROPEAN GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN
- ☐ INTERQUAL CRITERIA
- ☒ MEDICAL JUDGEMENT, CLINICAL EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED MEDICAL STANDARDS
- ☐ MERCY CENTER CONSENSUS CONFERENCE GUIDELINES
- ☐ MILLIMAN CARE GUIDELINES
- ☒ ODG- OFFICIAL DISABILITY GUIDELINES & TREATMENT GUIDELINES
- ☐ PRESSLEY REED, THE MEDICAL DISABILITY ADVISOR
- ☐ TEXAS GUIDELINES FOR CHIROPRACTIC QUALITY ASSURANCE & PRACTICE PARAMETERS
- ☐ TEXAS TACADA GUIDELINES
- ☐ TMF SCREENING CRITERIA MANUAL

- ☐ **PEER REVIEWED NATIONALLY ACCEPTED MEDICAL LITERATURE (PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION)**
- ☐ **OTHER EVIDENCE BASED, SCIENTIFICALLY VALID, OUTCOME FOCUSED GUIDELINES (PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION)**